

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4844

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0375

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: CASC (HUNTER, SMITH)

SUBJECT: KIDNAPPED STUDENTS

REF A BUJUMBURA 366, B. STATE 127473

1. STEINER, MACFARLANE, AND EMBOFF KAEUPER TRAVELED JUNE 01 TO MINAGO AND RUMONGE ON BURUNDK LAKESHORE TO CONTACT IGALIAN CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES, BRIEF THEM GENERALLY ON KIDNAPPING AND ON STEINER MISSION, AND TO EXPLORE MEANS WHEREBY CONTACTS MIGHT BE EFFECTED WITH CAPTORS USING BURUNDI AS BASE.

2. WITH ASSISTANCE OF LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION FROM VAGNI, MEETINGS WERE HELD WITH CATHOLIC FATHERS PIERRE AND ALBERT LANARO AND LUCIO LEGATO AT TUMONGE (73 KM SOUTH OF BUJUMBURA) AND WITH GIANNINNI PEDROTTI AT MINAGO (48 KM SOUTH OF BUJUMBURA). ALL INDICATED ACTIVE INTEREST IN SITUATION ANDNINDICATED READY WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST IF POSSIBLE.

3. WE DID NOT RAISE WITH ANY OF THEM POSSIBILITY OF SERVING AS INTERMEDIARY IN NEGOTIATING PROCESS. BELIEVE, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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ON BASIS OF YESTERDAY'S MEETING THAT, SHOULD BAGNI SCENARIO

NOT WORK OUT, PEDROTTI OR POSSIBLY PIERRE LANARO COULD BE ENLISTED TO PERFORM SAME FUNCTION. BOTH ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE, IMPRESSIVE MEN WITH LONG EXPERIENCE IN AREA. WE SEE PEDROTTI AS PREFERABLE OWING TO HIS SOMEWHAT MORE CONTROLLED, DISCIPLINED DEMEANOR WHICH LIKELY WOULD MAKE HIM MORE RELIABLE INTERMEDIARLY IN ANY NEGOTIATION SITUATION.

4. MISSIONARIES INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD DO WHAT THEY COULD DISCREETLY TO FLOAT WORD OF STEINER'S PRESENCE IN BUJUMBURA AND FELT IT POSSIBLE, ONCE WORD GOT OUT, THAT THIS MIGHT INDUCE CAPTORS OR THEIR INTERMEDIARIES TO CONTACT STEINER THERE. HOWEVER, ALL EXPRESSED SAME GENERAL VIEW THAT AT PRESENT THERE IS ONLY VERY LIMITED TRAFFIC AND COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SOUTHERN BURUNDI AND THE OPPOSITE ZAIRE SHORE. THE MOST ACTIVE ROUTES ARE AT NORTH END OF LAKE (UVIRA-BUJUMBURA) AND, TO THE SOUTH, BETWEEN KIGOMA AND SOUTHERN KIVU-NORTHERN SHABA. THIS WAS NOT THE CASE IN PAST, WHEN LARGE NUMBERS OF BABEMBE FROM ZAIRE WERE LOCATED IN SOUTHERN BURUNDI ALONG LAKE, BUT MOST OF THESE NOW HAVE BEEN REPATRIATED.

5. MISSIONARIES AGREED TO PASS ANY INFORMATION DEVELOPED AS RESULT OF JUNE 01 MEETINGS. WE ALSO INTEND TO EVISIT THEM ON JUNE 05 AS ROUTING FOLLOWUP.

6. IN LIGHT OF THIS MORNINGS VOA AND BBC COVERAGE OF STEINER'S MISSION TO BUJUMBURA, WE ARE NOW ATTACHING CONSIDERABLY LESS SIGNIFICANCE TO MATTER OF GETTING WORD OUT ABOUT STEINER'S PRESENCE IN THIS PART OF WORLD. AT SAME TIME, IT COULD BE USEFUL FOR EMBOFFS AT KIGOMA TO MAKE THIS POINT AS OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT THEMSELVES.
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